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Chairman: Mr. Kuchinsky ..... (Ukraine)
later: Ms. Groux (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Switzerland)

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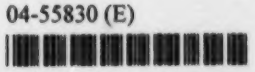

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Organization of work

1. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee), recalling that the Committee had decided in principle, at its 11th meeting, to extend an invitation to the Special Rapporteur on disability, said he had now been advised that a prior commitment prevented the Special Rapporteur from accepting. The question of the programme budget implications thus became a moot issue.

2. With regard to the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, he had been advised that the programme budget implications were essentially the same. The statement he had already made in that regard would therefore stand.

Agenda item 101: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/59/41 and Corr.1 and Add.1, A/59/184-S/2004/602, A/59/190, 274 and 331)

3. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the comprehensive assessment of the United Nations system response to children affected by armed conflict (A/59/331), said that, by raising the profile of the issue, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and relevant non-governmental organizations had ensured that children and armed conflict concerns were now addressed through political, economic and judicial initiatives as well as through humanitarian actions. Progress had been made in creating a robust framework of norms and standards and the primary focus was now on ensuring their consistent application.

4. The assessment had found that mainstreaming of child protection concerns had been inconsistent across United Nations agencies, in part because child protection was more difficult to understand and translate into programmatic action than child survival, but also because most United Nations actors tended to see it as the responsibility of UNICEF and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to develop an effective response to protection concerns. However, those entities could not adequately respond to the many challenges facing children in situations of armed conflict and the report made a number of recommendations for relevant United Nations agencies to incorporate those concerns into their own activities.

5. Although the United Nations system as a whole had demonstrated its commitment to the protection of children, more could and should be done, particularly with regard to the development and implementation of an effective monitoring and reporting system and follow-up on reported violations. Recommendations were also made in the report for improving coordination between agency headquarters and field operations, and within headquarters offices themselves, including the establishment of a group co-chaired by UNICEF and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, which would be responsible for developing an overarching strategy for incorporating those concerns in the work of the United Nations.

6. The Secretary-General had decided to implement the streamlined structure of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict as recommended by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, in order to enable the Office of the Special Representative to focus on the core functions of its mandate. The Secretary-General now asked the General Assembly to consider the best means of continued financial support for the Office of the Special Representative, including the use of regular budget funds, so that it could continue in its critical role of advocacy for children in armed conflict situations.

7. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that a great deal of progress had been made since the issuance, in 1996, of the report of Ms. Graça Machel on the impact of armed conflict on children (A/51/306). As a result of United Nations engagement, global awareness of the issue was now extensive, as illustrated by the coverage it received in the media.

8. He was impressed by the scope and sophistication of the Security Council's involvement in the issue. Peacekeeping operations, too, now ran training programmes and had introduced child protection advisers and incorporated child protection into their mandates. The level of NGO engagement, which had been directly inspired by the way the agenda had been articulated by the United Nations, was heartwarming.

Referring to initiatives by the European Union and the Economic Community of West African States, he said there had also been encouraging developments at the regional level.

9. Child protection had been integrated into peace processes and agreements and given special emphasis in post-conflict situations, where investment in the healing and rehabilitation of children was vital to any further progress. Children themselves had also become involved as advocates on the issue at the local and national levels.

10. The "era of application" was now at hand. It was time to embark on the practical implementation of the child protection agenda. Four tasks needed to be carried out.

11. Firstly, however impressive the panoply of norms and standards that had been developed, they were still largely unknown in those places where they should be well-known and implemented. They therefore needed to be publicized more widely.

12. Secondly, the child protection agenda would have no impact on the ground unless it was implemented in conjunction with the front-line institutions, organizations and professions that responded to the challenges involved on a daily basis. In that regard there was still a long way to go in translating the rhetoric of partnership into reality.

13. Thirdly, it was important to ensure that child protection was effectively mainstreamed by all institutions concerned and in all relevant processes; there again, the rhetoric did not yet match the reality.

14. Fourthly, it was essential to develop a reliable monitoring and reporting system, as the Security Council had requested. In that regard, he said he had devoted a great deal of time over the past year to consultations with Governments, regional organizations and NGOs, trying to get a clear picture of what the various partners would like to see, but their understanding of the concept still seemed vague and confused. For that reason he had presented the key issues in his report, in an attempt to structure the dialogue and help those involved to begin moving towards a consensus.

15. Much time had also been spent on deciding whether to engage in a debate on the definition of "armed conflict". His own view was that endless discussion on what constituted armed conflict could in no way help the children who were suffering on the ground. He proposed that, rather than chasing after elusive definitions, Committee members should continue to take a cooperative, pragmatic approach and to focus on the actual fate of those children and ways and means of ameliorating their conditions and providing some measure of protection and well-being.

16. Another time-consuming activity had been the update of the two lists annexed to the Secretary-General's report (A/58/546-S/2003/1053, namely list of parties to armed conflict that recruited or used children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council and of the list of other parties to armed conflict that recruited or used children in armed conflict, a process that necessitated careful verification of the facts before they could be presented to the Security Council.

17. He welcomed Security Council resolution 1539 (2004), which represented an important step forward inasmuch as it assigned formal responsibility to United Nations field presences on the ground for coordination, follow-up and monitoring where before only ad hoc arrangements had existed.

18. He emphasized that all the work carried out had been done without resources and with no staff capacity, since no steps had been taken to implement the General Assembly's decision in resolution 58/245 that his Office should be funded from the regular budget. That was regrettable.

19. He hoped time would be found to discuss his report in a transparent and substantive manner. The children in whose name the activities were being conducted deserved no less.

20. **Mr. Gautam** (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the General Assembly's special session on children (A/59/274), said the report provided an update on progress in the four goals adopted in the Declaration and Plan of Action entitled "A world fit for children": namely, promoting healthy lives, providing quality education, protecting children from abuse, exploitation and violence, and combating HIV/AIDS.

21. Progress had been somewhat mixed and efforts on behalf of disadvantaged children and their families needed to be stepped up. What progress had been made — in areas such as immunization, nutrition, clean

water provision and prevention of parent-to-child HIV transmission — was limited to a few countries and regions and needed scaling up. Moreover, the gains registered had often been offset by the adverse effects of conflict, natural disasters or HIV/AIDS. The report suggested ways in which action could be strengthened.

22. Turning to the promotion and protection of the rights of children, he said the past year had been a tragic one for children around the world. Despite the international community's commitment to protecting children, they had been bombed and slaughtered. In an appalling new development, schools were now being targeted. Whatever the situation outside, schools must be honoured as zones of peace, safe havens where children could enjoy their childhood. UNICEF urged all States that had not already done so to accede to or ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. It was also critical to stem the flow of small arms and landmines, the human cost of which made them true weapons of mass destruction.

23. UNICEF welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations system response to children affected by armed conflict (A/59/331) and was actively reflecting on the recommendations made and how best to implement them. It would also continue its fruitful collaboration with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, whose advocacy role it considered to be of critical importance. UNICEF had been working with its partners on a proposal for an action plan as requested by the Security Council in its resolution 1539 (2004).

24. UNICEF welcomed the fact that the situation of persons with disabilities and the promotion and protection of the rights of children without parental care now had a place on the international human rights agenda.

25. UNICEF was pleased with the progress made to date in the study on violence against children, in which it was one of the lead agencies. The study would be very helpful in deepening understanding of the links between violence and the impediments to realization of children's rights. He called on donors to provide sufficient funds to ensure that a thorough job could be done.

26. Sport, recreation and play were the activities children most enjoyed; they also taught important life lessons and bridged the divides between people. UNICEF was developing partnerships with all sectors of society to educate children and their families about the benefits of physical activity and to encourage them to participate.

27. **Mr. Ndiaye** (Director, New York Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/59/190) and to the report of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (A/59/41 and Corr.1 and Add.1), which provided information on the Committee's activities at its thirtieth to thirty-fifth sessions.

28. The Convention was the most widely accepted human rights treaty, with 192 States parties, while 84 States were party to its Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and 85 States were party to its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Committee currently met each year for three sessions of three weeks, each preceded by a one-week pre-sessional working group, and took up the reports of 27 States parties each year. However, broad acceptance of the Convention had led to a significant backlog — 58 reports were currently awaiting review — with the result that reports were usually considered about two years after they had been submitted. The situation was expected to worsen as more States parties submitted their reports.

29. As part of its strategy to improve working methods and address the backlog, at its thirty-fourth session, in October 2003, the Committee had decided to meet in two parallel chambers for an initial period of two years. The total cost associated with the decision, which would allow the Committee to consider a further 21 reports annually, was some $3,470,000. The Committee had asked the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session to approve the decision but no action had been taken. The Committee wished to implement the decision in time for the pre-sessional working group for its forty-first session, in October 2005.

30. **Ms. Astanah Banu** (Malaysia) said that, according to the Secretary-General's report on the comprehensive assessment (A/59/331), the Special Representative's mandate remained unchanged and no new activities were envisaged. Rather, he should focus future activities on the core functions of the mandate (para. 69). She therefore wondered why the Secretary-General was now recommending that the Office of the

Special Representative should be funded from the regular budget when it had previously been funded from voluntary contributions. She also asked for clarification on how reporting activities would be conducted by the Special Representative in the event that Member States agreed to such a recommendation and, in particular, on the status of the so-called "group of friends".

31. **Mrs. Faye** (Senegal) said that, despite international efforts, the number of children involved in armed conflict was increasing every day. UNICEF was doing an excellent job in rescuing and reintegrating such children, in cooperation with Governments. She would like to know how the Office of Internal Oversight Services cooperated with UNICEF, and would also appreciate clarification concerning the political, economic and judicial initiatives that the Under-Secretary-General had mentioned. Lastly, she wondered what support was being given to the many children who were separated from their families owing to armed conflict.

32. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services) said that, according to the report, the mandate did not need to be changed, but simply clarified, as neither the terms of reference of the Special Representative nor the emphasis on advocacy had been made very clear. The report also highlighted the need for the other agencies concerned, primarily UNICEF, to be involved in such areas as mainstreaming and reporting. The lack of clarity meant that, in the past, certain issues had "fallen through the cracks" and follow-up had not been carried out properly.

33. The Secretary-General had made no specific recommendation concerning funding. At its fifty-eighth session, the General Assembly had requested the report; it was now asking the Committee to consider how the Office of the Special Representative should be funded henceforth, whether through voluntary contributions as before or through the regular budget. It was essential for it to have a predictable means of funding.

34. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), responding to the representative of Malaysia, agreed that there was indeed a need to clarify how the various proposals and initiatives came together. First, while the General Assembly, in resolution 51/77, paragraph 36, gave the Special Representative responsibility for four very specific areas, the report merely stated that his mandate was broad. Second, the Secretary-General, in his latest report to the Security Council on the issue (A/58/546-S/2003/1053), stated that the Office of the Special Representative had a key role in facilitating and coordinating the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism, conducting consultations with all stakeholders with a view to establishing an appropriate mechanism (para. 101). While that was now the basis for his Office's work, it was not discussed in the report. Third, the report failed to discuss the recently adopted Security Council resolution 1539 (2004) on children and armed conflict.

35. There had never been any doubt in his mind that the focus of the Special Representative's work — in all four areas of his mandate — was advocacy. That was why he had always insisted that, while it was the Special Representative's role to gain commitments from parties to conflict and the Security Council's role to pass resolutions, following up those commitments and resolutions could only be done through a United Nations presence on the ground.

36. With regard to monitoring and reporting, advocacy work could be carried out not on the basis of a general moral appeal, but on the basis of very specific standards and how those standards were being violated on the ground. That was why his Office had begun a listing in conjunction with the Security Council. His mandate was to assess progress achieved, steps taken and difficulties encountered in strengthening the protection of children in situations of armed conflict (General Assembly resolution 51/77, para. 36 (a)) — hence the need for a concrete system — and to foster international cooperation and contribute to coordination (para. 36 (d)) — hence the reference in the report to a number of activities that he had initiated to bring together key United Nations actors.

37. To conclude, if his mandate did need to be changed, there needed to be a transparent discussion on the matter; it was also essential to streamline discussions in the General Assembly and the Security Council in order to avoid conflicting instructions.

38. **Mr. Gautam** (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund) said that his organization's role concerning children in armed conflict was well-known. Indeed, his organization had been founded for

that very reason following the Second World War and had been involved in protecting children in every war and conflict since, working in such areas as immunization campaigns, provision of water and sanitation, back-to-school programmes in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the demobilization of child soldiers. He was very aware that no agency could tackle the issue alone and therefore very much appreciated the work of the Special Representative in undertaking high-level advocacy and assisting UNICEF in its work in the field. He welcomed the Secretary-General's report (A/59/331), which highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of his organization, but also recognized that UNICEF required increased financial resources to fulfil its central role in the United Nations system (ibid., para. 29) and indeed to implement some of the recommendations made in the report. He welcomed both the report and the ongoing work of the Special Representative, and said that his organization remained committed to the issue of children in armed conflict.

39. **Mr. Hof** (Netherlands), referring to the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the General Assembly at the special session on children (resolution S-27/2, annex) and the forthcoming five-year review of the Millennium Declaration, asked the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF what he considered to be the most appropriate way of achieving both perspectives of the Plan of Action — development and human rights — and integrating them fully, equally and effectively into preparations for the high-level meeting of the General Assembly in 2005. He also wondered how the United Nations system and the Member States could best contribute to that process, covering all four priority areas of the Plan of Action.

40. Referring to the strategy to improve the working methods of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as outlined in its report (A/59/41), he asked the Director of the New York Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to expand upon the specific options that had been considered and to explain (a) why the division of work into two parallel chambers had been deemed the most appropriate and (b) how the Committee's diversity in terms of both geography and knowledge would be respected in both chambers, if such an approach were adopted. He would also appreciate additional information on how the Committee planned to monitor the implementation of concluding observations on both optional protocols to the Convention.

41. With regard to trafficking in children — in particular, the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children — he asked both the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF and the Director of the New York Office of OHCHR how the application of international standards on child trafficking could be best ensured and what were the major obstacles to combating trafficking in children. If one obstacle was lack of action at the national level, he wondered how UNICEF and OHCHR could help countries to develop national capacity. In that regard, he would appreciate concrete information on how UNICEF cooperated with the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and how it intended to cooperate with the new Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children.

42. With regard to children in armed conflict, the Secretary-General's comprehensive assessment (A/59/331) made specific recommendations on monitoring and reporting. In his conclusions, the Secretary-General expressed his determination to implement those recommendations without delay (para. 68). He would appreciate some suggestions on how the Committee should act in that regard. Moreover, Security Council resolution 1539 (2004) called for time-bound action plans to halt recruitment and use of children in violation of international obligations (para. 5 (a)) and the designation of country-level focal points to monitor compliance (para. 5 (b)). He wondered whether the Special Representative would be able to provide information on progress achieved in that area, especially given that the completion date had already passed.

43. Lastly, according to the comprehensive assessment, United Nations country-based staff had pointed out that there was often no concrete plan or direction as to how to follow up effectively on Security Council resolutions or on child protection commitments secured by the Special Representative (para. 45). He wondered whether the Special Representative would be able to provide additional information on steps being taken to improve coordination between United Nations Headquarters and the field.

44. **Mr. Gautam** (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund) said that UNICEF was very

deeply engaged in preparations for the 2005 review of the Millennium Declaration, working closely with the Office of the Secretary-General and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. In doing so, it was bringing to bear its experience in following up on the World Summit for Children held in 1990. Its experience in monitoring follow-up to those goals of the 1990 Summit that related specifically to children, such as reducing infant and maternal mortality and improving basic education, had been very helpful. UNICEF was also heavily involved in efforts to combat trafficking in children. It worked closely with the countries involved in the Yokohama process on combating the commercial sexual exploitation of children, and with the special rapporteurs.

45. **Mr. Ndiaye** (Director, New York Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) noted that the Committee on the Rights of the Child had been a victim of its own success, since the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been universally accepted, and there were therefore 192 countries reporting on its implementation. The number of members had been increased from 10 to 18, and the Committee had increased the number and duration of its sessions. Despite those efforts, however, it had been able to consider only 27 reports per year. It had therefore been decided that the only way forward was to introduce two parallel chambers. With respect to trafficking in children and to building the capacities of countries to deal with that problem, a new special rapporteur had been appointed, and actions in that regard would be carried out on an increasingly systematic and concerted basis.

46. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services) said that the recommendations on monitoring and reporting were designed to ensure that a working system was put in place. A task force must first be set up by UNICEF, together with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UNICEF, and other entities, to determine how a time-bound plan could be implemented, and to see how monitoring and reporting should be done. That required the establishment of networks in the field, set up together with non-governmental organizations having a special interest in the area of children and armed conflict. Those non-governmental organizations could help with coordination in the field. There must be a coordinated plan of action regarding the various programmes. Leadership in the field must be provided by the special representatives or by the resident or humanitarian coordinators. However, they must have input from the field, and NGO networks could ensure such input. UNICEF was looking at recommendations regarding such networks, and a plan would be forthcoming in due course.

47. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that, with respect to monitoring and reporting, the role of the Office of the Special Representative was essentially that of a facilitator. The Special Rapporteur convened the various actors, proposed and promoted the concept of monitoring and reporting, and took information from the system in order to prepare reports for the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Commission on Human Rights. The work in the field must be done by the operational agencies, such as UNICEF, under the leadership of the Special Representative and the Resident Coordinator. There must be clarity in that regard. The comprehensive assessment (A/59/331) contained no discussion of the considerable amount of work done under that heading by the Office of the Special Representative. There was a task force on children and armed conflict, which had sent proposals to the Security Council in 2003.

48. There were two directly contradictory reports before the Committee, both submitted in the name of the Secretary-General. The Committee must therefore find ways to face the issue at hand in a transparent manner, or there would be confusion, especially for his Office. With regard to Security Council resolution 1539 (2004), he noted that there were two kinds of action plan. With respect to those actions plans to be developed by the parties to the conflict, there were many examples of ongoing dialogue, but there were not many examples of dialogue undertaken specifically as a follow-up to the resolution. That was because there was a lack of organization in the field, and until recently, country teams did not feel that such organizational matters were part of their responsibility, hence the urgency of working to putting in place a monitoring and reporting mechanism in the field and of clarifying the role of country teams with respect to follow-up actions. The second type of action plan required under the resolution was specifically concerned with monitoring and reporting mechanisms. His Office had consulted with non-governmental organizations, delegations and regional organizations and had put forward a working paper as a basis for

dialogue. The process had taken longer than the three months specified by the Security Council, because it must involve many participants and be implemented at both the headquarters and country levels.

49. With respect to coordination between Headquarters and country teams, when the Special Rapporteur visited a country, the issues identified by the country team were discussed, and responsibilities for the various actions were allocated. The country team was responsible for follow-up actions. In some countries there had been strong commitment, but in others, country teams had not felt that it was part of their responsibilities. Resolution 1539 was an attempt to address that situation. His Office was in close contact with country teams, and the task force also met regularly to gather and process information. Although significant progress had been made, much remained to be done, particularly at the country level.

50. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) said that, although her delegation had, as requested, submitted detailed, graphic information about the devastating consequences of the Israeli occupation on Palestinian children, and had voiced its concerns on many occasions, the situation had not been reflected in the previous reports regarding children in armed conflict. She therefore wondered whether the situation of Palestinian children would be properly addressed in future reports.

51. **Ms. Alhajali** (Syrian Arab Republic) wondered how Member States would be informed about the next step, following the submission of the report (A/59/331). Paragraph 70 of the report was very clear, in stating that the General Assembly might wish to consider the best means of financial support for the Office, including the authorization of funds from the regular budget. She would therefore appreciate further clarification. On the basis of the report, her delegation felt that all the institutions in the follow-up to the report should address the issue of the protection of children, without duplication of effort. Such measures should be applied throughout the world, including the Arab world, where children were suffering under Israeli occupation.

52. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict), responding to the question from the Observer for Palestine, said that all information submitted for inclusion in reports was taken from all sources, and that once received, it was examined using the same criteria and cross-checking procedures. He had received the information submitted by her delegation, and was in the process of preparing the next report. If his Office received conflicting information, the policy was to rely on the word of the United Nations official on the ground, unless there were exceptional circumstances. Responding to the question from the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, he said that his Office tried as far as possible to be aware of all conflict situations and to mobilize support for the affected children. With respect to the funding of the Office of the Special Representative, he had not seen any reference in the report to General Assembly resolution 58/245 on the funding of his Office, and wondered whether the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services might be able to offer some clarification.

53. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services) said that the Secretary-General had not made a recommendation on funding in 2003, nor was he making such a recommendation during the current year. He was simply stating, in the report, that voluntary funding would cease by the end of 2004, and that the General Assembly should therefore decide what was the best means of future funding.

54. **Ms. Assoumou** (Côte d'Ivoire), responding to the Special Representative's remarks, said that, although Governments were supposed to be responsible for the protection of children's human rights, it was often they that used child soldiers to fight against rebel groups. She wished to know what was being done to bring an end to that situation, and she also wished to know what UNICEF was doing to reintegrate child soldiers, since countries in conflict generally lacked the infrastructure to deal with such children.

55. **Ms. Otiti** (Uganda) said that she was particularly grateful to UNICEF for its work to help children in Uganda, especially through its programmes in the country's northern region. She welcomed the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/331), especially paragraph 14, concerning certain shortcomings of the Office of the Special Representative, adding that she also regretted the selective manner in which countries were chosen to receive visits, since, as a result of that selectivity, certain conflict areas, including northern Uganda, were not visited. The Office of the Special Representative was an important one, and should

continue to play its advocacy role. However, she wished to know why funding was coming to an end.

56. **Ms. Banzon** (Philippines) wondered why much of the reporting on children and armed conflict fell within the remit of the Security Council, rather than the General Assembly. With regard to information gathered in the field, she wondered why such information was formally submitted to the Security Council first, rather than being shared with Governments.

57. **Mr. Gautam** (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund), responding to the question posed by the representative of Côte d'Ivoire, said that, as part of its demobilization activities, UNICEF tried to ensure that children received psychosocial support and access to schools. In Sri Lanka, for example, children had been held in camps until they were ready to be reintegrated with their families. With respect to the situation in northern Uganda, he noted that UNICEF Executive Director Ms. Carol Bellamy had visited the region. UNICEF had stepped up its activities, but the response of the international community had been inadequate, and more should be done.

58. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), responding to questions, said that funding for the Office of the Special Representative was coming to an end essentially because no more donor funding would be forthcoming. The Committee had endorsed funding out of the regular budget, but the Fifth Committee had not given its approval. He suggested that, if Committee members required more information, they might wish to consult the Controller.

59. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), in reply to the representative of the Philippines, said it was important to be clear about the purpose of the report being requested — whether it was to inform the General Assembly of the activities of the Office, a more in-depth report similar to the *State of the World's Children* reports issued by UNICEF or an analytical report — and to understand the resource implications of the request. Given its current capacity, his Office did not have the possibility of producing any of those types of reports, which were labour-intensive. The report it had submitted to the General Assembly was an advocacy tool, describing what had been done in a general way, although the Office discussed its programme of work in detail with donors. In his report just submitted to the General Assembly, he had chosen to dwell on the theme of mainstreaming of children's concerns into all areas of the Organization's work. He also considered his report to the Security Council a policy and advocacy tool, which focused on monitoring and reporting. It was automatically submitted to the General Assembly as well, and the "watch list" annexed to it was forwarded to the Commission on Human Rights. More discussion on the role of the Secretary-General and the General Assembly in setting the agenda for his Office would be useful.

60. In response to the representative of Uganda, he could add little to her description of the horrific conditions in northern Uganda, the complete collapse of social services for children, the mass abductions and atrocities committed against civilians, the hundreds of children forced to become "night commuters", seeking safety from abduction outside their villages, and the horrible conditions and high death rates in the so-called protected villages. His Office was deeply concerned and was working closely with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and with non-governmental organizations to improve conditions.

61. In reply to the representative of Côte d'Ivoire, he said that, in principle, every Government should be in a position, by its capacity and commitment, to care for its children. The only way for the services to be sustainable was for the national Government itself to provide the care, with the international community in a supporting role. Certainly, in some protracted situations of conflict, government control had collapsed or government parties themselves might be involved in the abuse of children, and in such cases those parties were included on the list forwarded to the Security Council. But local institutions must take charge in the long run.

62. **The Chairman** said he would take it that the Committee wished him to invite the Controller to report to the Committee concerning the question of the funding of the mandate of the Special Representative.

63. *It was so decided.*

64. **Ms. Londoño** (Colombia) said that her delegation would like to see more coordination with intergovernmental bodies by the Office of the Special Representative. A mechanism was needed so that the General Assembly could be better informed and participate in the drafting of reports.

65. The Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF had mentioned children under siege in Colombia, which found itself under terrorist threat from illegal armed groups. That situation had indeed affected the children of her country, but she was pleased to report that 600 children had been demobilized during 2004.

66. **Ms. Faye** (Senegal) asked about assistance being provided to children separated from their parents as a result of armed conflict.

67. *Ms. Groux (Switzerland), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

68. **Ms. Astanah Banu** (Malaysia) said she wished to clarify that her delegation's understanding of the mandate of the Office of the Special Representative was the same as that of the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services.

69. **Ms. Nguyen** (Canada) asked the Special Representative when his report to the General Assembly would be available.

70. **Mr. Gautam** (Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF), in reply to the representative of Colombia, said that in modern warfare the most vulnerable members of society — children chief among them — suffered more than soldiers. Over 2 million children had been killed during armed conflict throughout the world over the past decade, while the number of combatants killed was only a fraction of that number. Colombia was a wonderful example of a country with a children's peace movement, which in fact had been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

71. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that his report to the General Assembly had been submitted and was currently being processed by Conference Services. The role of the General Assembly in shaping the agenda for his Office was critical. The General Assembly and the Security Council saw the role of his Office in slightly different terms, yet their views were not mutually exclusive. Moreover, it was for Member States to decide on the acceptance and legitimacy of a monitoring mechanism; the role of his Office was to present information and facilitate action.

72. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services) noted that there were no written terms of reference for the mandate of the Office of the Special Representative, and although there was general agreement that the mandate consisted of advocacy and mainstreaming, it should not remain ambiguous.

73. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that, since his Office had limited resources and no field presence, it could not conduct capacity-building activities, but it could advocate for them. With regard to mainstreaming, it could ask how seriously United Nations institutions were taking the issue of children and armed conflict. For example, it could push for the inclusion of child protection officers in the personnel of peacekeeping operations, or insist that the concerns of children should be considered in peace negotiations; however, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations or the Department of Political Affairs were the offices responsible for carrying out those recommendations. His Office had no operational role; its role remained political, facilitating and convening.

74. Every two to three years it drew up a basic programme listing specific actions and goals, and it discussed its annual work plans with donors. He would have liked to issue a more comprehensive report to the General Assembly which could have contained that information, but did not have sufficient capacity.

75. **Ms. Otiti** (Uganda) asked why the funding for the Office of the Special Representative had stopped.

76. **Ms. Nguyen** (Canada) said it was her understanding that resources for the Office would run out at the end of December 2004.

77. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that his Office had struggled all year with a lack of resources and did not have sufficient to continue operations through December.

78. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services) said that perhaps donors could explain why funding for the Office had not been renewed; the Controller might also be able to provide information on that question.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.